

# Reimagining a Climate Changed Future: Local Examples of Community- Based Transformative Action



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
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The University of Sydney is located on the Gadigal lands of the Eora Nation. The Sydney Environment Institute acknowledges that these lands were never ceded, and we pay our deepest respects to elders, caretakers and custodians past, present and emerging here in Eora and beyond. We also want to acknowledge all the lands that these projects are on. There is no environmental justice without Indigenous justice.



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Cover image: Hand reaching for a plant. Image credit: Lawrence Aritao, via Unsplash. Image license: Unsplash license.

This report is written by Kelvin Gensollen Arellano, Manon O'Neill and Chi Tran, with guidance from Professor Danielle Celermajer and Genevieve Wright.



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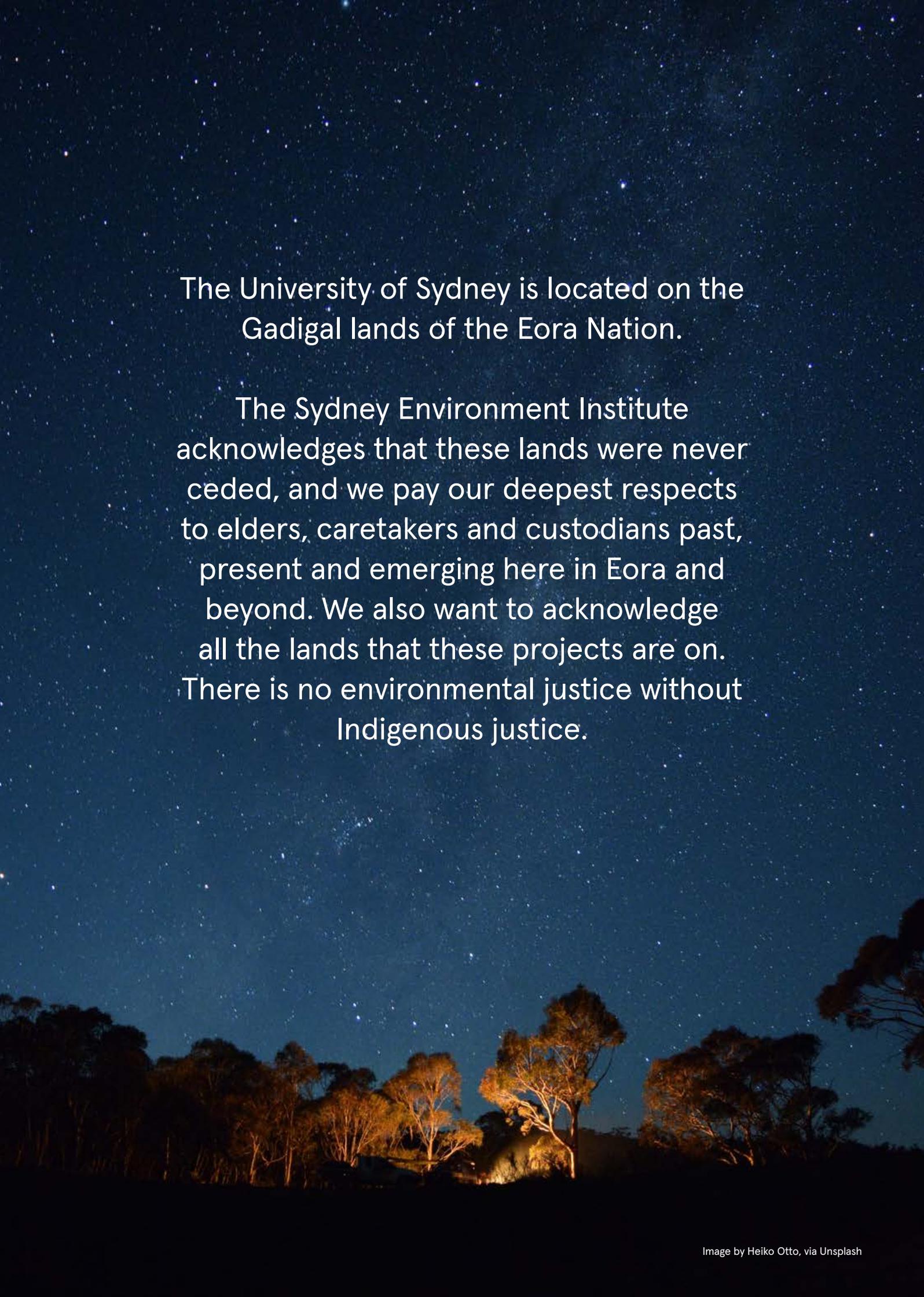
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This report is an output from the Sydney Environment Institute's research project [\*Transforming Future Imaginaries from the Ground Up\*](#) in partnership with [\*India and Bharat Together\*](#) and the [\*Social Entrepreneurship Association\*](#).



A night sky filled with stars, with a silhouette of a forest at the bottom.

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# Reclaiming and Reimagining Our Future

The climate emergency poses a crisis of imagination that limits the possibilities for action. For the most part, when people think about a climate changed future, they assume that business will continue as usual, or that technology will save us, or that we are heading towards an apocalyptic dystopia. None of these ways of imagining the future are helpful in orienting people to take the necessary actions needed to transform and adapt our lives to a warming world. However, [alternative imaginaries](#) are also emerging amongst some communities as they create the possibility of more relational, sustainable and ethical forms of life in a climate-changed world.

The [Transforming Future Imaginaries from the Ground Up](#) project brings together the [Sydney Environment Institute](#) (SEI), [India and Bharat Together](#) (IABT) and the [Social Entrepreneurship Association](#) (SEA) to explore how communities in Australia and India are reimagining their futures through their practices.

This project will:

- amplify these emerging and transformative imaginaries through creative mediums, including short films, community radio, artwork and written narratives;
- bring together communities involved in transformative action and enhance their capacity to communicate the systematic character of their approaches, and;
- equip young people to develop community-led systemic responses and produce effective communications about transformative projects.

By sharing these stories of communities creating their own imagined futures in response to a climate changed world, this project seeks to both inspire other communities seeking to address climate-driven destabilisation, and influence governments and NGOs to establish policy environments that enable community driven practices of transformation.

Image by Andres Siimon, via Unsplash



Solar farm in Northern Territory.  
Image by Joe Ferrer, via Shutterstock ID:517089196



### What does this report aim to achieve?

This report is an initial exploration into the inspiring transformative work already underway in Australian communities that are responding to threats posed by climate change. These communities are addressing the changes that extreme weather events, food and energy insecurity, and threats to agricultural practices are bringing to their lives, by building community resilience and connectivity. At this point, we are focusing on Southeast Australia, but we hope to learn about what others are doing across the country.

By sharing these success stories of community empowerment, this report acts as an initial inspiration and conceptual tool for other communities to create their own projects and networks that address the impacts of climate change and build greater resilience.

This report is not intended to provide a comprehensive account of all community-led climate projects in Australia, but rather focus on exemplary types of work that communities are developing around energy, food and community resilience. This is only the beginning for the Transforming Future Imaginaries from the Ground Up project and we'd like your help to build an ever-expanding database of inspiring initiatives. If your community is engaging in grounded transformative work responding to the climate crisis, please share your story with us by contacting the Project Manager, Genevieve Wright at [genevieve.wright@sydney.edu.au](mailto:genevieve.wright@sydney.edu.au).

# Mapping the Community Projects



Explore the interactive map [here](#).

-  Energy Projects
-  Food Systems and Regenerative Agriculture Projects
-  Community Resilience Projects

# Food Systems and Regenerative Agriculture

—  
Growing Forward  
SAGE  
CERES

The Dharrwaa Elders Group  
Food Connect Shed  
Growing Farmers  
Springwood Community Garden

## Growing Forward

Growing Forward is a group of guerrilla gardeners in Brisbane who are taking back misused or abandoned land to grow food for their community.

# Growing Forward

**Growing Forward** is a group of guerrilla gardeners in Brisbane who are taking back misused or abandoned land to grow food for their community. The project is working from the ground up to organise against unjust systems of power.

The **main goal** of their gardening is to disrupt Australia's colonial and capitalist systems and ideological underpinnings by:

- Growing food for vulnerable communities on unused public land;
- Empowering communities to grow their own food;
- Fostering food sovereignty with local people deciding where the food goes;
- Breaking unjust laws.

## Origins

Growing Forward started as a group of friends who shared a common interest in creating a form of mutual aid that did not engage with the capitalist framework. The climate catastrophe is impinging on everyday life and Growing Forward saw that our food systems are becoming increasingly precarious. Additionally, the group wanted to **challenge state sanctioned ownership** of land and the hegemonic ideology of private land rights.

Starting from this anti-capitalist and anti-colonial framework, the group called an online community meeting inviting their friends and promoting it on Facebook. At the meeting they brainstormed multiple ideas, such as dumpster diving, foraging, urban farms and guerrilla gardening. Subsequently, a few of them set out to identify state owned land where they could establish a community garden.



Image by Dan Gold, via Unsplash



## Boundary St Garden

The first garden established by Growing Forward was a piece of land that had been abandoned for over 7 years in the City of Brisbane LGA. The group took a few [steps](#) before creating the garden including:

- Asking permission from the Jagera and Turrbal people, the traditional owners of the land.
- Making sure the land wasn't contaminated.
- Engaging with locals about the garden. This included: asking how they would feel if there was a garden; flyering the neighbourhood explaining the garden and its anti-racist, anti-capitalist principles; asking permission from neighbouring houses; and, erecting a sign on the land days before stating their intention and contact details in case a member of the public wanted to get in touch with the group;
- A site analysis, making sure there was adequate sun and a nearby water source (council tap). The group brought two hoses from Bunnings and connected them together so it could reach their garden.

The group knew that the riskiest part of setting up a garden was a member of the public complaining to council. To combat this, the group quickly established the space, so people saw a functional garden straight away. The group also made a concerted effort to engage passers-by in conversation, explain to them the logic of guerrilla gardening and make them feel welcome in the space.

## Setting Up the Garden

### Day One:

1. Dumpster dived cardboard, soaked it in water and mulch and laid it on the ground (the land had low quality soil; they couldn't plant directly into it);
2. Organised the delivery of mulch to put a thick layer on top of the cardboard;
3. Purchased 10 cubic metres of soil and created the garden beds.

### Day Two:

1. Fencing established;
2. Erected signs and community boards that were made by an artistic friend (important step so community understood what was happening, how they could get involved and gave the garden an appealing aesthetic);
3. Set up compost bays to store materials.

On the third day the state government put up billboards and signs blocking their entrance to the garden. The signs threatened that trespasses would be prosecuted. The next day the signs had entry holes cut into them and they had been redecorated.

Throughout the project Growing Forward had strong community support, so the state government did not follow through. Growing Forward have since been contacted by radio stations and journalists to share their story.

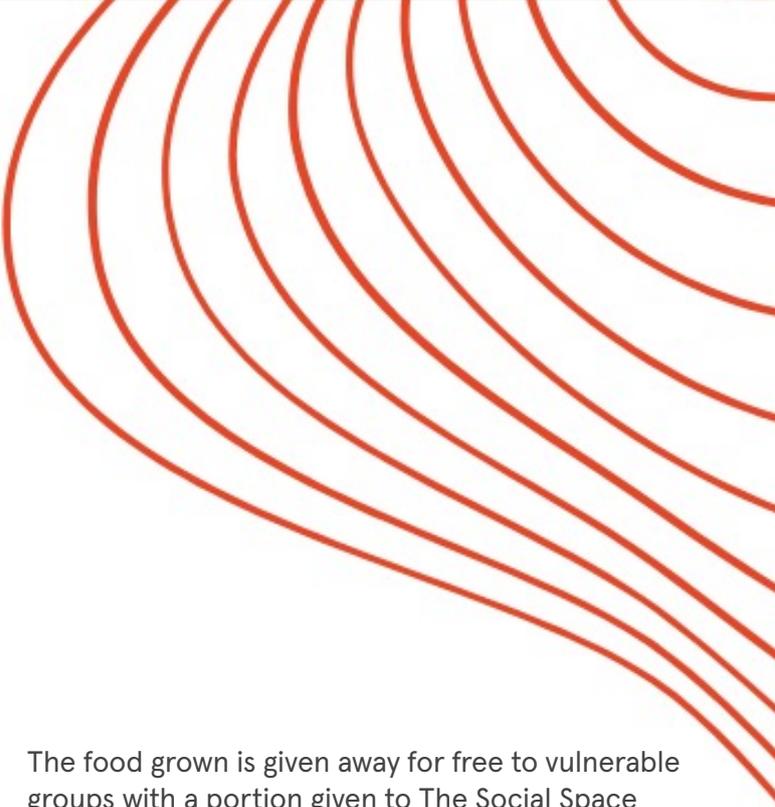


Image by Markus Spiske, via Unsplash

### Guerrilla Gardening and the Community

Two other gardens have since been created, with the community flourishing and radicalising through the project. Local people have taken on responsibility of the gardens and community capacity has grown, meaning they can function independently from the original Growing Forward group. The group has learnt the importance of organisational skills, including using rosters and online meetings to keep the garden functioning. A [Facebook group](#) keeps the community in touch and allows members to share information. Anyone can join and access the Growing Forward [Google Drive](#) which has all the information needed or someone to start their own garden in their community.

Growing Forward uses holistic decision making to include all members of the affinity group that decided to work together. Together they map out who their boarder community is, create a list of resources they have or could access, define the values of the project and create a roadmap of how they are going to achieve their goal.



The food grown is given away for free to vulnerable groups with a portion given to The Social Space who cook and give free meals to community members. When members of the public pass the garden and ask how it works, they are usually surprised that the food is given away for free. Growing Forward is challenging the current corporate food systems. They are creating a sustainable food source for their community that does not use extractive practices and does not prioritise profit. The project is making the community more sustainable in the face of crisis and provides the possibility for these gardens to be replicated across the country.



## SAGE

SAGE is a not-for-profit community organisation on the south coast of NSW that is re-imagining food systems.

# SAGE

**SAGE** is a not-for-profit community organisation on the south coast of NSW that is re-imagining food systems. Its vision is to challenge both existing farming practices that are bad for the environment and food distribution systems that are unjust. The vision for SAGE was spurred by friends in the Moruya community beginning to feel the effects of climate change, including droughts, bushfires and floods. The group was both reacting to the effects of climate change and seeking to proactively create systems change at a community level to cope with the future crisis.

SAGE has created a sustainable fair food economy that fosters food sovereignty by:

- demonstrating that small scale horticulture is viable;
- upskilling their local community;
- creating a space to share food, ideas, and knowledge.

## Background

SAGE developed in an area where there has been significant resistance to acknowledging anthropogenic climate change. Nevertheless, they have sought to find a way forward to addressing the climate effects they already saw materialising in their food systems and the threats that could be anticipated.

The first step was a group of friends creating a **Slow Food Community**. The Slow Food movement is an interconnected group of communities that span the globe sharing their goal of creating a sustainable relationship with food in the face of increasing environmental threats, including climate change. Their Slow Food group reflected the 3 types of people in their town: the “up the river hippies”; the “new professionals”; and the “old guard farmers”. This initiative lit the flame to expand beyond their households and show their community a vision of what farming could look like in a climate-changed world.

Each group contributed an element of their expertise, which combined, brought SAGE to life. The old school farmers remembered the agricultural history of diverse food production on the south coast, spurring the group to “re-find the food system that was here”. The Eurobodalla Council helped source the site and granted a licence to a 600 square metre block of land. Four members of the group – a farmer, a landscape architect, a biodynamics teacher and an architect sat down to draw up their vision for this land. Its three sections would demonstrate how residential blocks could be used to grow food, undertake commercial horticulture to fund the project and provide a communal space to store tools.



Image courtesy of SAGE

This program challenges standard forms of learning by paying their students and empowering young locals to engage with their food systems, revitalising the agricultural workforce.

### SAGE Coming to Life

For 3 years, SAGE sold products they grew in their organic market garden to cafes and restaurants. This funded the fencing and infrastructure they needed. Early on, the SAGE group had sketched out a plan, but soon realised it was more a process of “trial and error”. Different produce was trialled, and projects evolved to suit community needs. The SAGE Garden is now solar-powered, collects rainwater and has an area for workshops, social events and a dancefloor. The garden holds education workshops that teach people how to grow sustainably and cook with homegrown ingredients.

As SAGE grew, it became clear that it needed more land. Its own farm would provide a space to train interns (who were originally mentored by local growers in the community garden), provide space for new market gardeners, and allow for the circulation of nutrients around the farm. However, access to land has proved a major roadblock due to the rising price of land and land banking exacerbated by state planning laws. Although in 2020, they managed to establish [Stepping Stone Farm](#) (SSF), a 5-acre plot 8km outside Moruya. SSF’s objectives are to secure Moruya’s food supply, create jobs in the Eurobodalla shire and serve their community. The farm’s infrastructure, fencing and irrigation systems cost \$200,000 to set up. While SAGE receives some grants from the government for training, the farm had to be self-sustaining to become viable, through selling their produce.

SAGE now partners with [Eco Crews](#) who are funded by NSW Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund. Together they offer paid positions to locals on SSF. Interns simultaneously receive an award wage job, undertake accredited training and are given a business blueprint. This program challenges standard forms of learning by paying their students and empowering young locals to engage with their food systems, revitalising the agricultural workforce.

When they faced difficulties accessing existing markets, the group established SAGE Farmers Market. This both makes their small-scale farming commercially viable and creates a connection between the local community and producers. The market has grown from 12 to 25 stalls selling a range of produce.

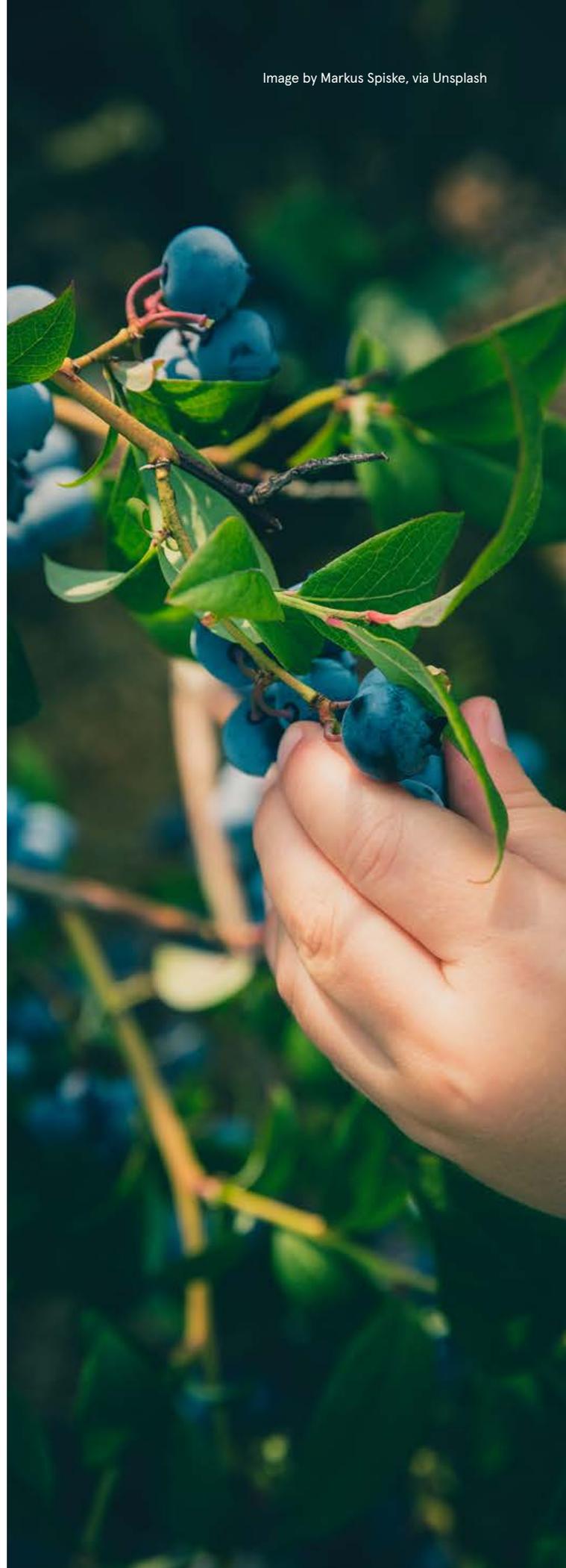
As locals could not always come to the physical market, especially with COVID, demand for an E-market emerged. Wanting to maintain the direct line between producer and consumer, and for consumers to be able to “name exactly where everything came from on their plate”, they modelled their E-market on the physical market. During COVID orders jumped more than six-fold putting pressure on their technological infrastructure. In exploring new online shopping platforms, SAGE is committed to their core value, that “it’s always been about the grower”.

## Volunteers, Networks and Community

The Eurobodalla Shire Council has been critical in various ways. It helped source the site of the garden, assisted with development issues, supported projects, and provides in-kind and financial support. The NSW government has also supported their food education programs. Fundamentally though, SAGE is a community organisation driven by volunteers. Each project has a volunteer committee, such as the main stage committee, event committee and the Stepping Stone Farm committee. SAGE works within a network of supporters, volunteers, growers, food producers and businesses in their community and shows people how they can be self-sufficient through this work.

SAGE is an evolving project and has many goals lined up, including developing a template on how the project can be replicated elsewhere. Steppingstone Farm and the farmers market can be replicated across regional areas throughout Australia. Our future is increasingly uncertain with rising temperatures causing more catastrophe each year. A project like SAGE helps future proof areas by supplying food security and local jobs. SAGE shares their story through a newsletter and a supportive local newspaper.

SAGE says, “the most powerful thing they did was ensure community engagement.” The vision wasn’t grand but just required a combination of strategic thinkers, people prepared to get their hands dirty and a plan to get people on board. The community could see the physical plan materialising and recent crises made its value even clearer. During the bushfires and the pandemic, regional areas were the first to feel the effects of chain supermarkets running out of fresh produce. It was the local growers and market that created a reliable source of food for their community. Locals started stopping the SAGE team on the street to say, “now I understand”.



# CERES

The [Centre for Education and Research in Environmental Strategies](#) (CERES) has carved out an alternate way of interacting with the earth through its experiential education, regenerative urban agriculture and creation of a community centred system. The mission of CERES is “To fall in love with the earth again”. They are constantly exploring new ways of being and interacting with their environment as well as creating resilient communities in the face of [ecological crisis](#). They have implemented an [Environmental Management Plan](#) to proactively organise in preparation of environmental impacts and have created a [Carbon Policy](#) and [Sustainable Purchasing Policy](#) to help mitigate effects.

## Background

CERES was formed in 1982 by a community group who asked the council if they could utilise some land around in Brunswick around Merri Creek to grow vegetables. The creek had historically been used by the Wurundjeri people as a vital part of everyday life. After European invasion, the area was turned into a landfill site, polluting the water and causing mass loss of the wildlife. CERES and other organisations revitalised that land, bringing back species like the Kingfisher bird.

The land is currently owned by Moreland City Council but operates as an independent community group with an elected board with “the purpose of protecting and enhancing the natural environment”. A non-for-profit incorporated association, they are now 95% self-funded.

## Projects

CERES has multiple projects exploring different ways to create a transformative shift. Below is a sample of the projects CERES has created in partnership with [dozens of organisations](#).

## Social Enterprises

- [Nursery](#): Supplies the elements you need to get you started with your own urban farm.
- [Organic Farms](#): grow, harvest and sell their produce to contribute to local economy and provide employment, provide a learning space and inspiration for community members.
- [Honey Lane Market Garden](#)
- [Joe’s Market Garden](#)
- [Community Kitchen](#): commercial kitchen that can be rented.
- [CERES Fair Food](#): Delivery system of local food to support their local food system.
- [Food Forest](#): Transforming abandoned paddocks into farms.
- [Organic Grocery & Bakery](#): Locally sourced food that can be enjoyed while listening to local artists in a community space.
- [CERES Fair Wood](#): connects firewood buyers with local growers and millers, prioritising sustainability.

“We are countering the narrative that encourages us to think of ourselves as individual consumers. We are human beings of Planet Earth, and we are profoundly and radically connected to the Earth and to each other”

## Education and Training

CERES has countless [workshops and courses](#) with many focusing on sustainable urban agriculture such as:

- Beginning permaculture
- Complete Urban Farmer
- Gardening in small spaces

## Community

- [EcoHouse](#): Is a building designed to demonstrate smart planning that limits energy consumption. The house features insulation through thermal mass brick walls, north facing and double-glazed windows, draught sealing, air-lock entry, efficient appliances, crossflow ventilation, heat recovery system plus more.
- [Bee Group](#): New members are shown how to be a beekeeper
- [CERES Urban Orchard Project](#):
  - Every Saturday produce is swapped by over 200 community members
  - Community food cycle, sharing seedlings that are grown by others with produce brought back to the market
  - Less waste, creates stronger relationships, builds food security, uses seasonal local food cutting out the need for transport

CERES has developed some of the tools and habits we need to respond to the climate crisis. Their education programs equip community members with “the practical skills, knowledge, leadership qualities and community resilience that will be needed in the coming decades”. Their social enterprises demonstrate how urban farming can provide a means of living and their community ethos overturns our understanding of individual consumption and establishes new habits.



## Dharriwaa Elders Group

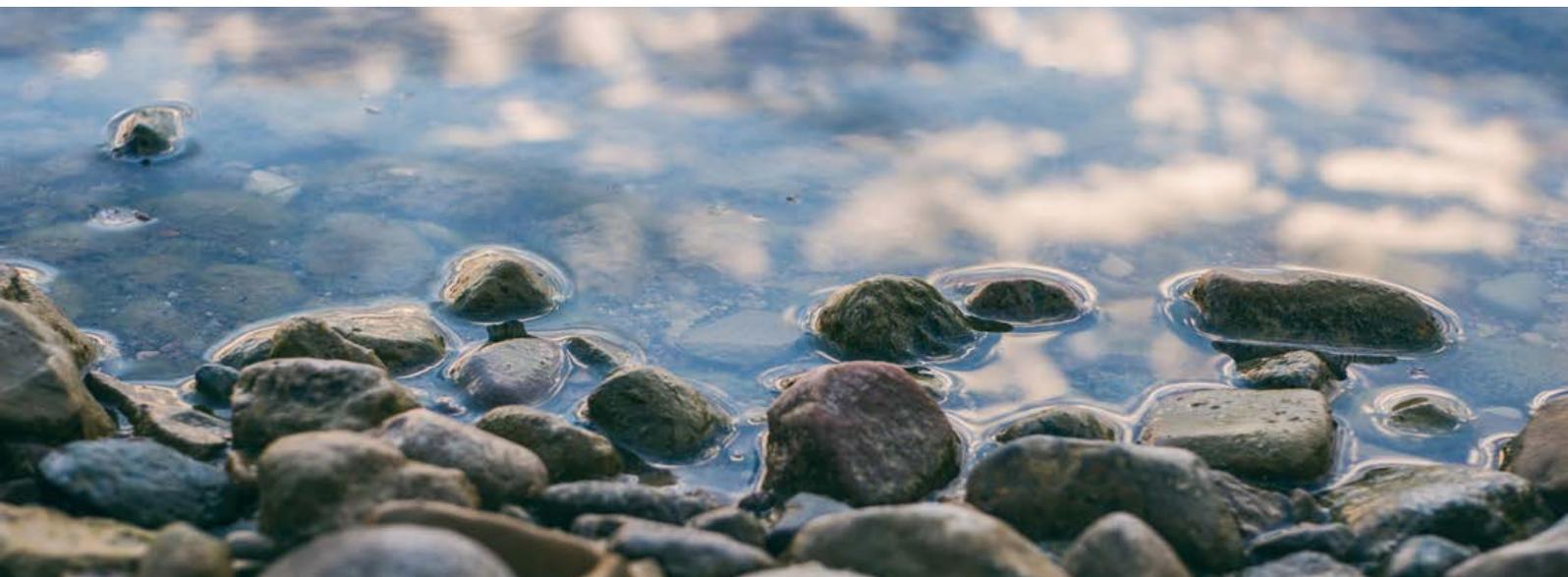
The **Dharriwaa Elders Group** (DRG) is a community-led organisation that is pushing for access to safe water and fresh food in their community. For years the town of Walgett in western NSW has had [precarious access to water](#), creating major health risks for locals. DRG has partnered with [multiple organisations](#) to push for recognition and funding for water and food security. These partnerships have spurred various projects to increase the liveability in their area.

### Background

The Dharriwaa Elders group was formed in 2000 with the purpose to support Elders and protect Aboriginal cultural heritage and knowledge. Recently DEG partnered with the University of NSW, forming Yuwaya Ngarra-li (YN) to improve the wellbeing of the Walgett community. In 2018 YN held a [Food Forum](#) to hear from community members about the impacts that the worsening drought is causing and the problems of water and food scarcity. In the past, Walgett has had access to water from the two rivers outside the town - the Barwon and the Naomi. However, these have run dry for years due to climate change and forced the community to use bore water as their drinking source.

After the forum, The Food & Water for Life Program Working Group was created led by DEG and Walgett Aboriginal Medical Services (WAMS) aiming to find solutions to food and water security issues. The working group includes staff from many different organisations and levels of government and in 2020 received an [Increasing Resilience to Climate Change grant](#) from the NSW government.

Rivers and water are a [central part](#) of Walgett culture and life as they provide water and food security for the community and the wildlife. The DEG's name comes from one of Walgett sacred sites, [Narran Lakes - Dharriwaa](#) (common meeting place). Water is crucial to the continuation of Aboriginal culture, as water provides substance to the land, people and wildlife. Without water they have "no special places to go, no animals to hunt. Our totem animals are dead, their bones are everywhere." Gamilaraay elder Virginia Robinson [commented](#) saying the situation is worse than a drought, "to me is the ultimate destruction of our culture...".

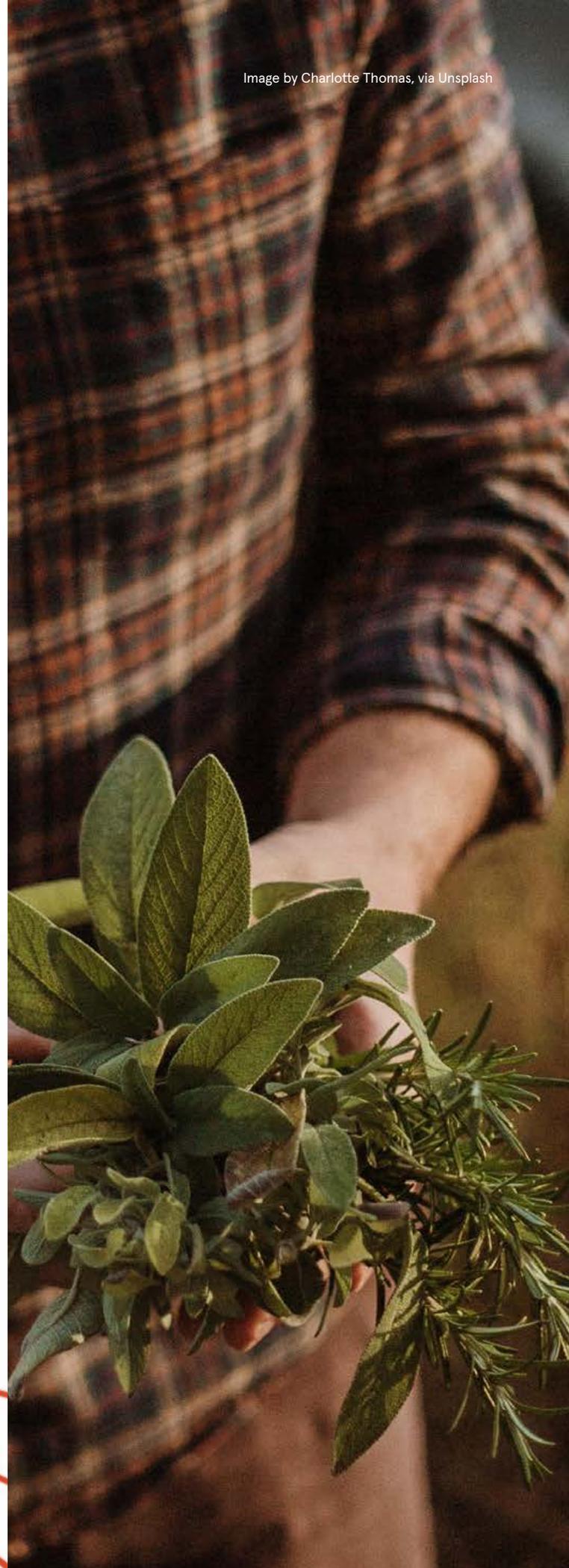


## Projects

Drinking water has been a major issue as bore water has a poor taste and smell and can be dangerous to drink. DEG worked with an ABC journalist to draw attention to this issue and their efforts created enough pressure to get the NSW government to act and install a reverse osmosis system in Walgett. While the system installed wasn't sufficient to overcome all of the issues, DEG worked with Walgett Shire Council to design drinking fountains for the town that made the water safer to drink.

With support from the working group, a WAMS community garden was revived. The garden had previously grown vegetables for the community but with no water had not been able to continue. The project created a low water use garden with locally sourced materials and used "Biofilta Food Pods". These pods are designed for bottom watering, which enables less evaporation and drainage and so requires less water. There are now 40 pods that provide fresh food for the town. The garden has provided an opportunity for the community to learn about food, gardening, cooking, healthy eating, provided local employment and food security in the face of crisis.

DEG spearheaded these projects, pushing and advocating for their community. By working with multiple organisations, the liveability in Walgett is improving and water and food security is being revived.



## Food Connect Shed

**Food Connect Shed** is creating community-level system change by fostering a food network that is “equitable, regenerative and healthy”. The “Shed” is a massive warehouse, a malleable space that shifts based on community need. Originally, The Shed was being rented out by the social enterprise [Food Connect](#). After crowdfunding efforts from the organisation, The Shed was purchased by 521 members of the local Brisbane community creating the [Careholders](#) of Food Connect Shed.

Food Connect was started by a small group of farmers from the Brisbane area that had identified a disconnection between the products they were producing and the consumers. Moreover, the community was beginning to feel the effects of climate change. The group decided there needed to be a change. Food Connect has since worked to connect growers and farmers with locals and distribute produce in a local food hub. Additionally, Food Connect has created employment that provides a living wage for its staff. The organisation was established proactively to create a regional food economy that was owned by the community establishing an embodied and constructed alternative to the current capitalist system. Food Connect has evolved to find ways of being that create less ecological and social harm.

The Shed has expanded this vision in multiple ways. First, it supports [multiple food organisations](#) such as [Oz Harvest](#) and [Ballistic Beer Co.](#) Second, it nurtures microenterprises to create a space where they begin their food journey. The Shed has a council approved commercial kitchen with workstations, professional-grade gear and storage space. This kitchen can be hired at an affordable rate and people get access to discounted local produce. Moreover, the space encourages a collaborative and supportive environment for bigger organisations to share their knowledge.

The shed offers marketing and promotion for micro-enterprises. This supports the upskilling of local creators and contributes to making a wider local food community. Finally, the community can rent out the space because [“The Shed is your space”](#). The warehouse can mould to one’s imagination, holding anything from weddings, music gigs, art exhibitions to community forums or book clubs.

Food Connect Shed supports micro-enterprises, regenerative growers, ignites ideas, has created a stable market for local growers and most importantly, materialised a space to dance. As they state on their website they are “putting the culture back in agriculture.”



Image by Priscilla Du Preez, via Unsplash

## Growing Farmers

In 2020, in the Local Government Area (LGA) of Moreland, a group of residents came together with a shared concern of the current climate crisis and its effects on their food systems. They set out to foster food resilience in their community, so they started, [Growing Farmers](#). The project aims to upskill their local community in urban farming and increase regenerative farming in their area. Growing Farmers is [“urban farming by the community for the community”](#).

Their first project, [Backyard Farmers Project](#), launched in 2020. This project connects community by linking landowners who do not have the time and/or skill to farm, with urban farmers in need of land. Backyards are transformed from dirt and weeds into thriving small scale farms, that nourish the community by increasing accessibility to fresh food. In one [garden](#), crops range from tomatoes, pumpkins and bush foods like midyim berries and river mint. Landowners and the people doing the growing build a relationship with each other and with the land and both benefit from the exchange. Farmers are supported with assistance sourcing land, mentoring, and business coaching and can sell or donate their produce at the [Fawkner Commons Hub](#). Landowners are supplied with a box of fresh produce and can learn from the farmers.

Their second project, [Moreland Urban Farm](#), aims to secure a plot of land where the group can create a community farm to support aspiring farmers, contribute to the local food system and foster a space for connection.

Growing Farming shares their story through their [Instagram](#), profiling the farmers, landowners and documenting the farms. Moreland Council has supported the project by creating a [short film](#) with Growing Farmers. The project is growing and in October 2021 announced they are receiving more funding from Open Gardens Victoria (OGV) to create 2 new farms.



Image by Kelly Sikkema, via Unsplash

Since its conception it has been supported by OGV, “A reimagining health project” (Vic Health) and Moreland Councils’ Community Grant Program.

While it was the climate crisis that catalysed the project, the COVID crisis has brought more people to the gardening movement. Crisis has demonstrated how vulnerable our food systems are and shown their community how important it is to create food resilience and community resilience by working together.

# Springwood Community Garden



Image by mynewturtle, via Shutterstock ID: 690143179

**Springwood Community Garden (SCG)** has grown both food and connection for the Springwood community located in the Blue Mountains in NSW. After the 2013 bush fires that raged through the town, the community has been on a long road to recovery. Their work on the garden has helped to build relationships between isolated members of the community and create a healing space for their town.

The garden was created after the 2013 bush fires and was pioneered by Emanuela Prigioni. As a young mother in a town that was collectively recovering from the fires, she was feeling isolated. The land was donated to the community by the Catholic Parish as part of the Bushfire Recovery Plan and supported by Catholic care which provided start-up funding. Emanuela designed the SCG and has since been created by locals, creating a healing space for bushfire survivors and isolated members of the community.

The garden has multiple sections, with one devoted to growing vegetables. Collaboration is created through the monthly “crop swappers” event where community members share crops with each other. They also have weekly working bees to create a communal time to meet other gardeners.

The mandala garden incorporates the pine trees that were destroyed during the bush fires into the functional and artistic parts of their garden. The trunks of burned trees have been chopped into sections creating a boundary for the circular garden. The ground inside the mandala is layered with old cardboard and a thick layer of mulch that was created from the pine trees. Coffee grounds from local cafes fill the spaces in between the logs to ward off snails and slugs. Some pine logs outside of the mandala are stacked in a mismatched fashion on top of one another with smiley faces carved into their trunks.

This garden has been healing for the community who have faced the devastating effects of the climate crisis. Springwood Community Garden has joined a growing food movement that recognises the importance of locally sourced food in reducing the effects of climate change as well as creating a stronger interconnected community.

**Food Share “is not about the monetary value on produce” but community with community.**

# Community Energy

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**Haystacks Solar Garden Project**  
**Totally Renewable Yackandandah**  
**Project**

Climate Action Newcastle  
Community Energy 4 Goulburn  
Community Power Hub  
Hepburn Wind  
Repower Shoalhaven  
Southern Otways Sustainable Inc.  
Voices for Power

## Community-Owned Renewable Energy Projects

**People’s attitudes around energy are shifting; they’re considering where their electricity comes from, how they use it, and its influence on our planet and other people.**

Individuals are embracing emerging technologies and engaging in empowering community organisation methods to meaningfully combat climate change. One way this is happening is through community-owned renewable energy projects (CORE), where a community initiates, develops, operates, and benefits from renewable energy development. They allow individuals to work together to generate renewable energy sources in ways that could not occur if they were to work individually.

Communities across Australia are working together to harness their renewable energy potential by developing solar, wind, bioenergy, and hydropower. CORE assist in decarbonising, decentralising, and democratising a community’s electricity system while also demonstrating the viability of renewable energy technology. One of the advantages of community renewable energy is that each project is adapted to a particular community’s specific needs and circumstances. In addition, CORE empower communities by promoting community participation, resilience and educating people about renewable energy.

The early phases of a thriving CORE usually involve a small group of people willing to devote their time to develop the project. This group should ideally have experience with community participation as well as an interest in technical details.

CORE may operate with the assistance of local government, in the form of funding and/or technical support. The following case studies of CORE reveal the relational flow between stakeholders such as community members, councils, government, and organisations. Commonly, the stakeholders share the objective of protecting the planet from the crisis of climate change and some join to gain financial benefit.

## Haystacks Solar Garden Project

Haystacks Solar Garden seeks to address the challenge of people who do not have access to roof-top solar panels and aims to decarbonise, decentralise, and democratise energy.

# Haystacks Solar Garden Project



Image by Mariana Proença, via Unsplash

Back in 2016, Gemma – a farmer from Grong Grong (a small town in the Riverina region of NSW), Jonathan – a solar project manager, and Tom – a community energy expert, teamed up to develop a renewable energy model that would meet their criteria of a project that was local, community-owned, and small scale. [Haystacks Solar Garden](#) (HSG) will be installed off-site in the Riverina, NSW and managed by the [Haystacks Co-operative](#). The co-operative is managed by community members of the project, with solar plots available for purchase to anyone in NSW.

The first objective of HSG is to enable those locked out of the benefits of rooftop solar a way to participate. The project also empowers members to act as decision makers where each member has one vote in the project. Anyone in NSW is able to become a member and receive on-bill credits from the solar plots they purchase. The project does not provide returns as good as rooftop solar panels, but it paves the way for everyone to access the financial benefits of renewable energy, regardless of their living situation.

HSG is a pilot project that promotes community control whereby people can have a direct say on their energy future by cutting their dependence on large energy retailers such as AGL; companies that also invest in fossil fuel energy.

There is also a sense of pride felt by the people in the region adding clean, renewable energy as one of their exports to Sydney alongside grain and other farm products.

Another transformative objective of HSG is decentralisation. By developing multiple small scale solar gardens, local communities spread across the country are able to have a say in how our energy system is managed and controlled. This also supports the resilience of the electricity system, instead of a few large, centralised energy generators that are increasingly faulting with extreme weather events, multiple smaller scale generators spread this risk.

The project came about through a partnership between [Pingala](#) (a Sydney-based community renewable energy co-op), [Community Power Agency](#) and [Komo Energy](#). HSG has also partnered with [Enova Community Energy Ltd](#) as the electricity retailer to pass on the on-bill credits to solar gardeners.

HSG receives financial support from the NSW Government Regional Community Energy Fund, solar plot investors, and other direct investors. Their stories, member rules and disclosure statements are shared on the website. NSW residents who are interested in the project can become members of the Haystacks Solar Garden Co-op [here](#).

## Totally Renewable Yackandandah Project

With several community-owned renewable energy projects developed, Yackandandah is a town in north-east Victoria with the goal to be 100% renewable energy powered by 2022.

# Totally Renewable Yackandandah Project



Solar panels on suburban house roofs in Melbourne, Australia. Image by Adam Calaitzis via Shutterstock. ID: 1675830391

**Totally Renewable Yackandandah (TRY) was formed in 2014 and since, has developed several community-owned renewable energy projects in Yackandandah, a town in north-east Victoria, as a way of addressing the climate crisis and making the town self-reliant.** TRY is working to transform the Yackandandah community to 100% renewable energy by 2022. Their 100% model aims to ensure the town always has enough electricity to cover demand. As well as reducing carbon emissions by using green energy, TRY also aims to invest in *islandability* – the ability for the town to operate independent of the main grid during times of emergency. In the face of natural disasters such as bushfires, when connection to the centralised grid is disrupted, the town could then supply its own power.

TRY works with local community and related organisations to inspire projects to transform local energy sources. According to [Australian regulations](#), CORE projects are required to contract with electricity retailers to operate; hence TRY has formed [Indigo Power](#) (community electricity retailer). Indigo Power was established to empower the community to take control of their electricity consumptions and operates in the interest of the community. Yackandandah's CORE are funded by the local community (13%), philanthropic donations (33%), local government (1%), state government (29%), and the federal government (24%). In July 2020 TRY received a federal grant of \$346,000 to conduct a feasibility study for the 100% renewable energy project.

A 100% volunteer run community group with the lofty goal of powering this small Victorian town with 100% renewable energy, giving resilience, savings, lower emissions and showing that it can be done.

The 100% renewable energy plan has five stages (Figure 1). Stage one is to equip homes in the community with rooftop solar systems. Stage two is to install energy monitoring systems so that the community's members can view their daily energy generation and usage. Stage three is the deployment of batteries to store electricity for night-time use or to feed it back into the main grid. Stage four is to increase battery storage and build local network power sharing so community members can share solar generated electricity and create a community retailer (Indigo Power). The last stage is to consider other renewable resources such as pump-hydro, hydroelectricity, wind, and a solar farm.

TRY has enabled the town to work towards decarbonising and democratising their electricity consumption. As a result of democratisation, the projects are owned by the community, they have the power to participate in decision making and planning.

TRY shares their stories on their website and social media, people can get involved by becoming members, and subscribing to their site to receive regular information about developments.

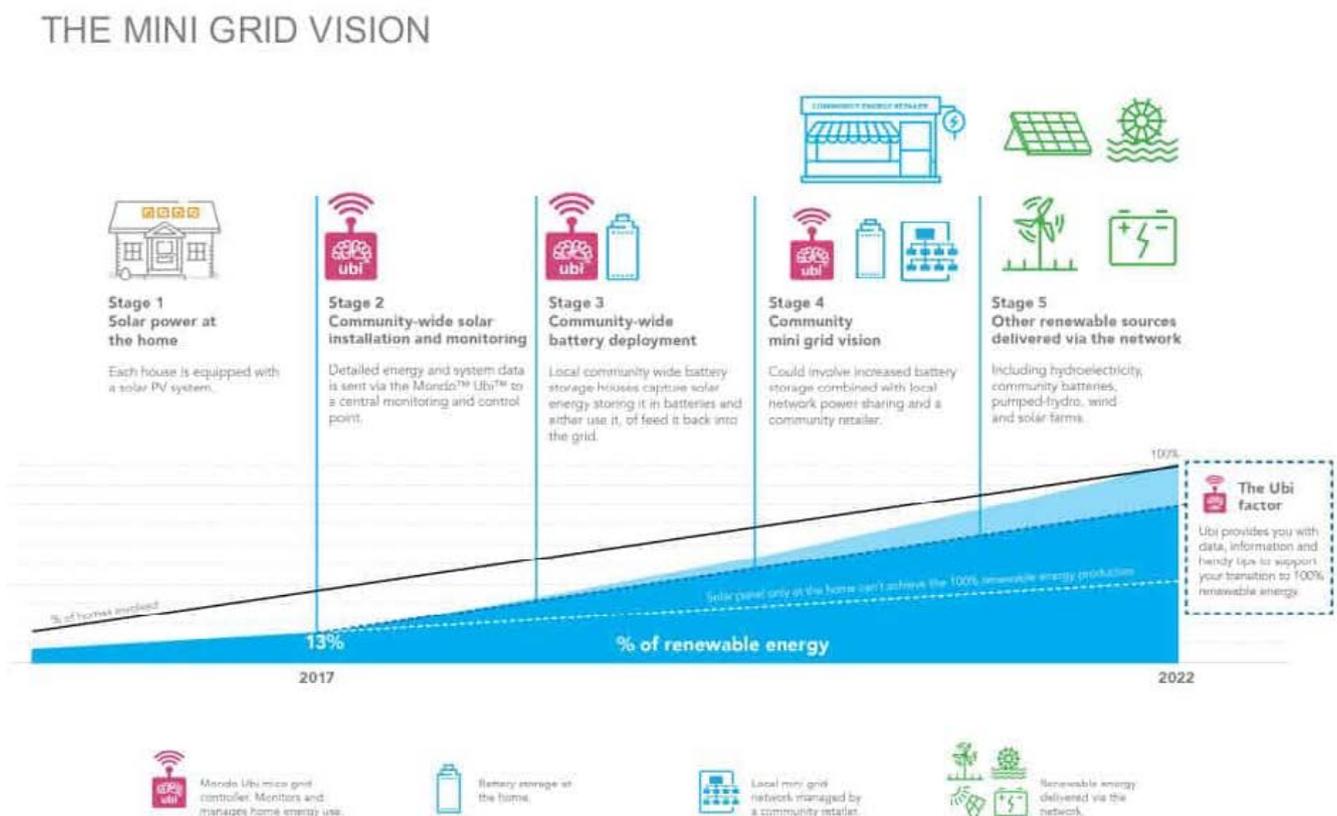


Figure 1 - Image courtesy of Mondo Power

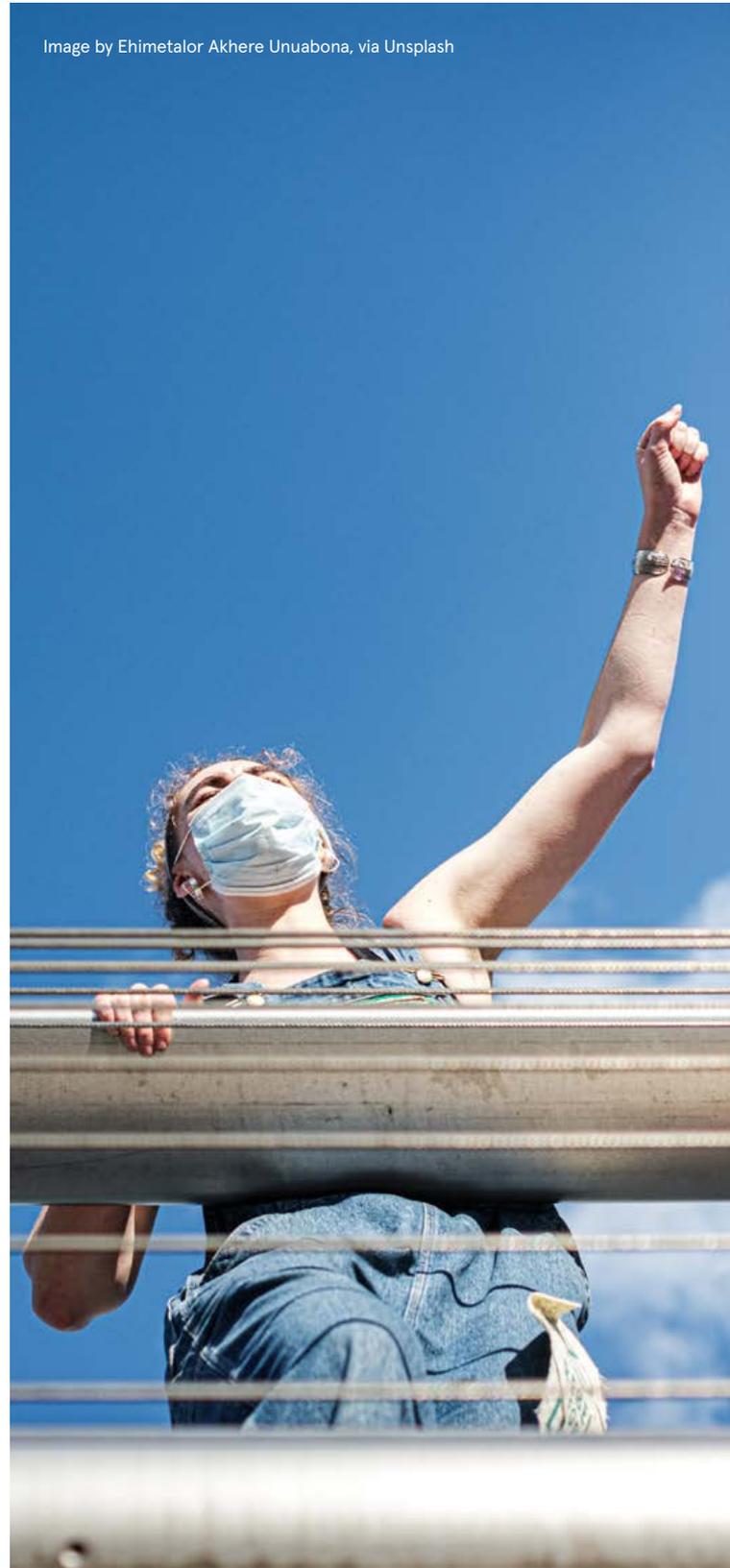
# Climate Action Newcastle

**Climate Action Newcastle's members are committed local residents from all backgrounds working together to tackle one of humanity's biggest challenges: climate change.** [Climate Action Newcastle](#) (CAN), a not-for-profit and non-aligned community group, was established in August 2006 by a small group of concerned Newcastle citizens, with the aim of educating and empowering the community to respond to climate change.

CAN develops and promotes climate change solutions for households, government, and industry. Its goals are to encourage the community to move toward a clean energy future, become a powerful local voice on climate change issues, and achieve measurable results in reducing carbon emissions. CAN has offered individuals who are either studying or working in the environmental space a real hands-on not-for-profit campaigning experience. CAN's website provides information on [environmental](#) issues such as climate change and global warming and sets out feasible solutions to protect the environment. People are welcome to subscribe to monthly newsletters and receive notifications of occasional special events.

In addition to providing a community network for educating and campaigning, CAN also supports several community projects. By collaborating with the Carrington Bowling Club's CEO Jaci Lapin, together they created the first "Going Solar" project which reduced usual high energy costs for the small local club by investing in renewable alternatives. Due to a successful crowdfunding campaign led by CAN, the club had a 50KW Solar System installed on their roof, reducing their energy bill by an average of 50-60%. The importance of this project was transformative for the local community whose livelihoods rely on the Hunter's coal industry. CAN notes that this project reflects the changing attitudes of locals and their recognition of the benefits of transitioning to renewable energy.

Image by Ehimetalor Akhere Unuabona, via Unsplash



## Community Energy 4 Goulburn

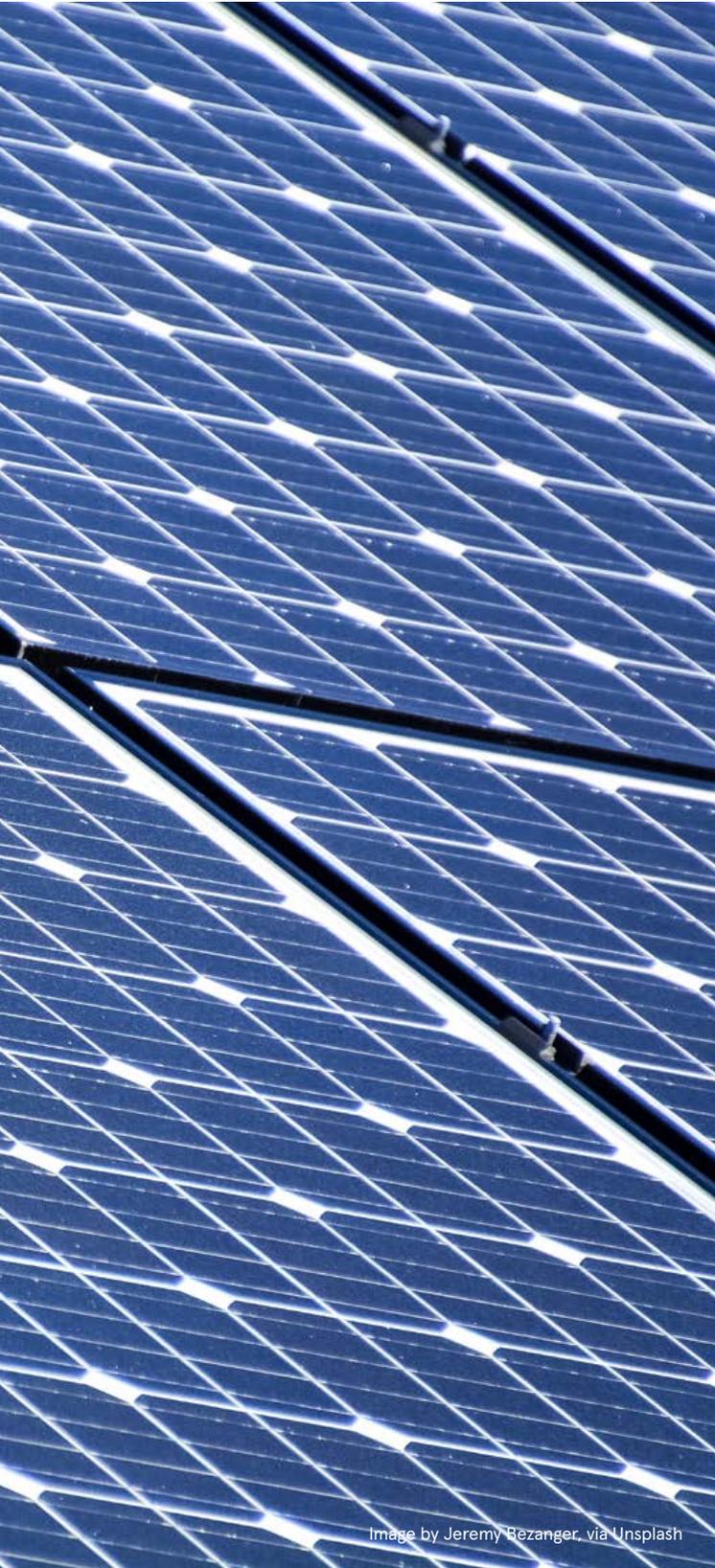


Image by Jeremy Bezanger, via Unsplash

**Community Energy 4 Goulburn (CE4G)** is an independent not-for-profit association in the Southern Tablelands of NSW that operate multiple projects such as the **Goulburn Community Solar Farm**. CE4G was originally set up by the Goulburn Group, a not-for-profit community group who received [funding from the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage](#) to explore the possibility of creating a community energy project in the Goulburn region. After CE4G conducted a feasibility study in 2016, development is underway for the proposed solar farm of 4000 panels on a 2.5 ha site. CE4G follows a co-operative model where each member has a vote, irrespective to how many shares they have. The primary goal of the project is to reduce the carbon footprint of the community.

In addition, the project employs local people, local contractors, and suppliers. By being community-owned, the community runs the project, the profits are kept in the community, and the benefits stay in the community. The people are the main driver for the transformation. Everyone in the community is welcome to the project, including residents, community organisations, schools, the local council, and businesses.

Whilst the solar farm is in development, CE4G has partnered with [Energy Locals](#), a retailer that supports renewable energy and invests in local communities by championing lower power bills and ensuring part of its revenue is put back into the community to finance the development of the proposed solar farm. The community hopes this is just the beginning for their relationship with Energy Locals, with plans for Energy Locals to eventually buy the output energy from the developing solar farm and distribute to Goulburn's residents.

# Community Power Hub

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**Community energy projects (CE) empower communities to be the drivers for change at the grassroots level; a bottom-up approach to protecting the environment that is also cost-effective.** [Community Power Hub](#) (CPH) is an example of a CE project that was set up by the Victorian Government to empower locals to develop community-owned and operated renewable energy projects in regional areas of Ballarat, Bendigo, and the Latrobe Valley. One of the benefits of CE is they empower communities by providing them with electricity that is generated from renewable sources like solar and wind farms, reducing their dependence on fossil fuel energy and mitigating the devastating effects of climate change.

CPH provides support and guidance to local communities that want to run community energy projects but do not know where to start. CPH provides project toolkits and guides on solar farms, solar roofs, energy storage, microgrids, and bioenergy.

Communities can contact CPH to help them develop proposals for CE projects. CPH might start by helping the community to set up an advisory group that involves community representatives, council, government representative, local households, and local businesses, which will work together to assess proposals for changing the energy system. They also provide support in developing technical and finance options. Once all the necessary processes are complete, the project is handed over to the community. CPH has supported community-owned renewable energy projects such as the [Ramahyuck Solar Farm](#), [Yinnar Solar Footpath](#), and [Licola Wilderness Village](#).

## Hepburn Wind



Image by Arteum.ro, via Unsplash

**Hepburn Community Wind Park Co-operative** (Hepburn Wind) is a community-owned renewable energy project in Leonards Hill, northwest of Melbourne. The project comprises two turbines with a capacity of 4.1 MW, generating electricity for 2,300 homes. The project seeks to address the climate crisis by producing green energy that can replace the dominant fossil fuel energy. At the same time, the project promotes self-help, democracy, equality, and solidarity in the community.

Hepburn Wind is a co-operative project owned by the community. The co-operative manages the wind farm, provides financial returns to its members and funds community projects through a community fund generated from electricity exports from the project. The project has contributed \$15,000 per turbine annually into the [fund](#). According to Australian law, community energy projects are required to sell their electricity through registered [electricity retailers](#), so Hepburn Wind partners with [Powershop](#). If people want to access electricity generated by Hepburn Wind, they can switch to Powershop as their electricity provider where they will be purchasing 100% green electricity at a competitive rate. Hepburn Wind has also created local jobs and capacity building to enhance locals' skills in project management, communications, and governance.

# Repower Shoalhaven

**Repower Shoalhaven** is a community association facilitating the development and implementation of renewable energy to deliver goals for local communities in the South-East of NSW. Their goals include carbon emissions reduction (55% reduced by 2030, about 400,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions), creating sustainable jobs, providing financial benefits to communities by lowering power bills and investing in solar and other clean energy facilities (households save between \$2000–\$4000 a year). The association has an [electricity plan](#) for Shoalhaven that includes solar photovoltaics with batteries and electric vehicles (EV). The critical targets for the Shoalhaven (2021 to 2025) include increasing the current rooftop PV installation rate and system size, building suitable EV fast-charging facilities, building up to 10 community solar farms, and increasing the vote for candidates in the upcoming Local Government election who support a transition to renewables.

**The Shoalhaven Solar Farm** is currently under construction in South Nowra with 8000 panels and due to start operating at the end of this year or early 2022. Shoalhaven Solar Farm Pty Ltd, [Flow Power](#) (power retailer) and the [Shoalhaven City Council](#) are in partnership to run the project. The solar farm is managed by the Shoalhaven Solar Farm Pty Ltd – a community/private partnership, that offers electricity to local businesses via power purchase agreements through Flow Power. Flow Power is a retailer and trading name for Kin Power Group Pty Ltd, that focuses on supplying renewable energy to communities. The solar farm is placed on Shoalhaven City Council land with 30 years leased term. Their stories are shared on the homepage, and anyone can join the organisation, invest in projects, participate in decision-making, and gain valuable work experience.



Image by Derek Sutton, via Unsplash

## Southern Otways Sustainable Inc.

**Frustrated and tired of the lack of government action taken to fulfill the goals climate scientists insist Australia needs to meet by 2030 to prevent catastrophic climate change, a group of people from the Southern Otways area in Victoria decided to create a community group and take action into their own hands.** In 2018, they founded [Southern Otways Sustainable Inc.](#), a non-for-profit community organisation of volunteers who aim to meet one specific but critical objective: transforming the Southern Otways region into a 100% energy sustainable community by 2030.

Many people living around the area are concerned about the consequences of climate change. And most are also willing to contribute in an effort to mitigate the impacts to their region. For example, upwards of 90% of the people in Apollo Bay have expressed an interest in installing solar panels on the rooves of their homes. The problem is that realising that aspiration can be daunting. Publicly available information about the types of solar panels and batteries that can be paired with particular houses and electrical systems can be highly technical and for many people in the region, on top of the costs of the hardware and installation, the costs of hiring a technical expert to advise them can be prohibitive. In response to such obstacles, Southern Otways Sustainable Inc. has joined forces with [Mondo Power](#) and [City to Surf Solar](#) to support the community by undertaking the evaluation and installation process free of charge. Their collaborative work has contributed to more than 110 free solar assessments.

In 2019 the community organisation also investigated the energy demands of Apollo Bay and the feasibility of achieving the 100% renewable energy goal. The community applied for a grant from the Colac Otway Shire to create an energy map in which information about the energy demands of each community as well as their access to sustainable energy infrastructure is detailed.



Apollo Bay, Victoria, Australia. Image by Kevin Bosc, via Unsplash

Through that research, Southern Otways Sustainable Inc. determined that rooftop solar panels would only be able to meet 50% of the community's need. They are currently exploring alternatives to supplement renewable energy, such as solar farming.

Southern Otways Sustainable Inc. has demonstrated that a community is capable of taking independent action to help its members to reach a more sustainable future, regardless of direct government support.

## Voices for Power

Led by the [Sydney Alliance](#), [Voices for Power](#) is a community project working to ensure that affordable and clean energy is available to all people across Sydney. The project supports communities throughout Western Sydney to understand the Australian energy system and to access government support so as to transition to cleaner, more affordable, and sustainable energy. Bringing together people from different cultural backgrounds, suburbs, religions, and ages, the project places special emphasis on ensuring low-income populations are provided with clean energy solutions and have access to affordable energy during heatwaves and other extreme climate conditions.

### Current Projects

Voices for Power has created a variety of initiatives to address energy needs in Sydney. One example is a [Train-the-Trainers Project](#), which helps migrants and low-income communities to understand the complexities of the Australian energy system and to find more affordable energy options. Part of the impetus behind this project is the recognition that the Australian energy system is often difficult to navigate, leading to migrant and low-income communities paying higher rates than necessary. Additionally, members of such communities may not have had opportunities to become aware of government programs that subsidise clean energy costs. The difficulties that already marginalised communities face in working out how to navigate the energy market and apply for available supports may lead to people in situations of hardship paying higher bills or suffering through heatwaves without adequate home cooling. Thus, to protect the health, well-being and financial interests of migrants and low-income communities, as well as promote the use of clean energy, the Train-the-Trainers program provides practical information and training about energy systems to community leaders.



Girl in a playground during the 2019–20 Australian bushfires. Image by Greg Stonham, via Shutterstock ID: 1606249351

Another project that Voices for Power is currently engaged in is the creation of a pilot solar garden in Western Sydney which will provide solar power to around 1000 homes, including those of people who would normally be unable to access solar energy because they live in apartments or rent their homes.

Voices for Power is also advocating for more energy changes at the state level, including making the Sydney bus system 100% electric and advocating for additional funding to support medium-sized solar projects across New South Wales.

# Community Resilience

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**Tarnagulla Alternative Energy Group**  
**Wild Mountain Collective**  
Resilient Blue Mountains  
Resilient Byron  
ReStore Australia



## Tarnagulla Alternative Energy Group

Like many other towns in Australia, Tarnagulla's dwindling population has seen the town's infrastructure deteriorate but those left are paving the way to a brighter future by responding to the consequences of climate change.

# Tarnagulla Alternative Energy Group



Image by Nuno Marques, via Unsplash

**Surrounded by the forest of the Dja Dja Country in Central Victoria, sits Tarnagulla, a small town with around 133 residents.** Like many other towns in Australia, Tarnagulla is facing a problem of a decreasing population, which has led to the deterioration and abandonment of much of the infrastructure around the town. The town is susceptible to blackouts, and most of its residents are elderly, making them less resilient in the face of extreme weather conditions and bushfires. Though there are around 1,700 other small towns in Australia with characteristics similar to those of Tarnagulla, Tarnagulla is paving the way to a brighter future with its unique plan to address the consequences of climate change.

[Tarnagulla Alternative Energy Group](#) was first conceived during a community meeting in 2017. Aware of the global consequences of climate change, members of the community were meeting to discuss foreseeable future impacts to Tarnagulla and the surrounding regions. However, it was soon realised that deeper and longer-lasting investigations would be necessary to fully understand and prepare for what was to come. Tarnagulla Alternative Energy Group was thus conceived as an ongoing project focused on understanding the local impacts of climate change

and planning solutions that would increase community resilience. In recognition of the complexity of their undertaking, as well as the time, experience, and finances that would be necessary to bring about real change, the group applied for financial support from the [Victoria Department of Land, Water, and Planning \(DLWP\)](#) as well as from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT).

In order to understand how climate change might impact the town, Tarnagulla Alternative Energy Group first sought to get to know the characteristics and needs of people living in the town. To do so, they developed a series of community workshops, in which individuals could share their ideas, stories, and concerns about the future. Participating in the workshops also got people involved in the development of the project.

In an effort to attract the attention of even more community members, they also staged special events. One that garnered a lot of interest was a simulation of what might happen if an extended heat wave were to hit the region. Participants, ranging from local community leaders and police officers to council members, the Department of

Tarnagulla Resilient Action Plan has the power to align independent projects and invigorate community members and organisations, ultimately creating a cohesive direction for all to move in, with benefits for the entire community.

Health Services, and even Victoria's ambulance service, had to perform as they would in such a situation. They were invited to consider the needs of other community members as well as services and assistance that would likely be needed during an extended period of hot weather. For example, they were asked to consider how to collect water or store food in case of a blackout. This exercise also helped them realise that firefighters would likely be tackling bushfires and not be available to assist the community at all times. Considering these potential complications in a simulation scenario rather than a true disaster allowed the community to put safeguards in place, as well as define roles and leadership positions that would be taken up if such an event were to occur.

Using information gathered from the workshops and events, in September 2020, Tarnagulla Alternative Energy Group launched the [Tarnagulla Resilient Action Plan](#). The plan provided a series of practical solutions and actions for community members to take, as well as projections for larger-scale projects that would likely be necessary in the future.

The plan appears to have lifted Tarnagulla's community spirit, providing clear avenues for collaboration and building community resilience. For example, following the release of the plan, people quickly became more involved in the work of the community garden, as well as in assisting elderly people with their activities of daily living. Additionally, other community initiatives have emerged to support the concepts laid out by the plan.

For example, in consideration of the town's vulnerability to blackouts, one group is now working to implement a sustainable energy project. Another group is planning to create ecological tourist attractions to bolster the town's economy. Finally, Tarnagulla has even been approached by groups outside of the community that are interested in collaborating on restoring Tarnagulla's historical buildings and the implementation of the plan.

Though the Tarnagulla Alternative Energy Group has made great strides since launching its plan in September 2020, it has also faced challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic has slowed the pace of community work and reduced the number of people involved. This has led to difficulties with implementing some aspects of the plan and getting new projects underway.

For the people of Tarnagulla, having a plan is crucial to becoming more resilient to climate change. A plan provides a guide for taking action. It has the power to align independent projects and invigorate community members and organisations, ultimately creating a cohesive direction for all to move in, with benefits for the entire community.

As is frequently emphasised by community members, Tarnagulla is a small town just like any other in Australia. Residents are hopeful that what they have done and learned can be useful for many other communities as well.

## Wild Mountain Collective

Wild Mountain Collective aims to transform the way people experience nature so as to create a deeper sense of connection with Australia's natural environment.

# Wild Mountain Collective

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Blue Mountains, NSW, Australia.  
Image by Josh Withers, via Unsplash

**The Wild Mountain Collective** is a project that was created by the **Blue Mountains Creative Art Network**, an association of artists from the Greater Blue Mountains, NSW. Consisting of artists, photographers, philosophers, sculptors, anthropologists, and environmental conservationists, the Wild Mountain Collective aims to transform the way people experience nature so as to create a deeper sense of connection with Australia's natural environment. The collective takes much of its inspiration from Australia's First Nations peoples, who have long recognised storytelling and art as tools of resistance capable of opening people's minds to different perspectives on reality. For generations, First Nations people have preserved their cultural knowledge and identities in their Songlines, which involve art, music, dance and storytelling. In doing so, they have worked diligently to resist the forces of colonisation and attempts to eradicate their cultural heritage. This history of resistance acts as a powerful reminder that art is a fundamental part of the human experience by which culture and knowledge are transmitted and kept alive. It is from this understanding of the role that art must play in the sharing of knowledge that Wild Mountain Collective takes much of its inspiration.

The Wild Mountain Collective believes that climate change and massive species extinction are rooted in the imposition of modern Western culture around the world. They believe that modern western culture is founded on the idea of human superiority over all other species. Modern western culture assumes that humans must dominate nature and use it to our benefit. This idea is driving our current economic practices, such as the massive extraction of raw materials to produce ever-evolving new technologies to expand our cities and food production, but is, at the same time, destroying natural habitats. Over hundreds of years of colonisation, such ideas have been spread around the world, ultimately becoming so entrenched and dominant that thinking and acting accordingly is largely considered to be not only normal, but superior to other ways of thinking. Thus, it becomes difficult for people living within Westernised societies to imagine alternative ways of thinking about our relationship with nature.

## Art revolutionises our relationship with the environment.

The Wild Mountain Collective believes that art can play a crucial role in revolutionising people's beliefs about their relationship with the environment. The collective views art as a portal through which feelings, emotions, and intuitions can be accessed. Works of arts, such as films, dances, paintings, sculptures, and music, have the power to transmit alternative ways of seeing nature and taking care of it. As such, the Wild Mountain Collective is dedicated to using art to tell stories focused on humanity's connection with the environment through a non-Westernised lens.

While governance structures for the Wild Mountain Collective are provided by BMCAN, the Collective operates on a co-creation model of participants through a range of projects and blog articles. This allows for task-specific participation, rather than requiring all members to be involved in every aspect of project development.

Additionally, the Wild Mountain Collective has created its own theory of action. They believe that supporting and collaborating with the work of other groups and individuals is critical to having an impact on the broader community. Thus, in contrast to some other organisations, which often focus on creating their own projects, Wild Mountain Collective's working methodology is to be alert to pre-existing projects and initiatives, including individual cultural workers, whose practice aligns with their values and then support and collaborate with them in different ways. For example, the collective is currently working with Janelle Randall-Court, a Bundjalung/Yaegl artist, on a project called [Re-imagining Waste Art Project](#), which attempts to change the way young people think about waste through the use of art and play.

Additionally, the Wild Mountain Collective forms part of [Resilient Blue Mountains](#), a community network working to make the Blue Mountains community more environmentally sustainable and resilient. They are working with Resilient Blue Mountains on an annual Festival of Resilience which is aligned with the [Blue Mountains Planetary Health Initiative](#), which is a global movement focused on analysing and addressing the impacts of climate change on human health as well as all life on Earth. The collective's website supports a blog, and reports on individual projects and events. These have included an occasional Exploring Ideas Seminar, and an annual multi arts event, Encountering the Wild, held at Dargan near Lithgow.

The Wild Mountain Collective is able to increase its effectiveness through collaboration, rather than relying on large grant funding, recognising that many organisations are already leading climate change actions, so collaborating and supporting their work is another way to secure the success of those activities and protect the environment. That methodology allows the Wild Mountain Collective to participate in different projects at the same time, as well as to delegate to their members specific tasks rather than the direction of a whole project. As result, the Wild Mountain Collective is involved in different activist networks through which they can have an impact on the preparedness of Blue Mountains communities for future climate change crises.

## Resilient Blue Mountains

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**For several years, various groups and individuals have been developing strategies and taking action to transform the Blue Mountains region into a climate change resilient community.** Then, following the 2019–2020 bushfires, the 2020 floods, and the Covid-19 pandemic, the community came to the conclusion that to achieve sustainable recovery and to make the Blue Mountains region more resilient to the ongoing effects of climate change, they needed to form a coalition that brings various efforts together. In September 2020, a variety of disparate community projects and organisations joined together to create [Resilient Blue Mountains](#).

Resilient Blue Mountains aims to show the world that, in addition to helping combat climate change, sustainability can be economically beneficial to communities that invest in it. Resilient Blue Mountains supports local efforts to create an eco-tourism market in the Blue Mountains region, where local products, sustainable businesses, buildings and well-preserved landscapes are tourist attractions in and of themselves.

Communities participating in the Resilient Blue Mountains project have also established various groups to address specific climate change challenges. One group, for example, focuses on researching and developing a strategy for 100% community-owned renewable energy. Another aims to build resilience to bushfires through the use of Indigenous cultural burning techniques as well as raising awareness about the causes of bushfires. Others focus on waste management and recycling, raising community awareness about the causes and consequences of climate change, and working with local politicians to coordinate support for the actions of organisations participating in the project. All groups are led by local organisations, and they are open to anyone who is interested in joining. Find out more about these working groups [here](#).

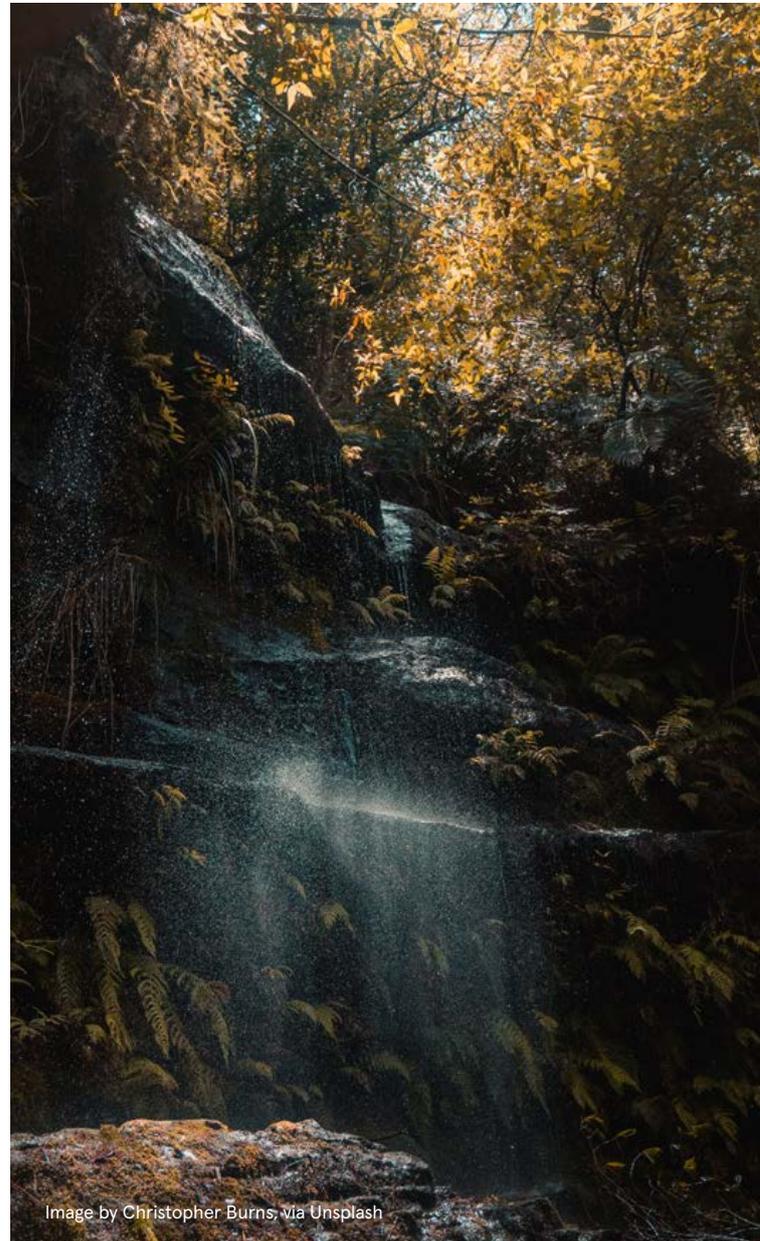


Image by Christopher Burns, via Unsplash

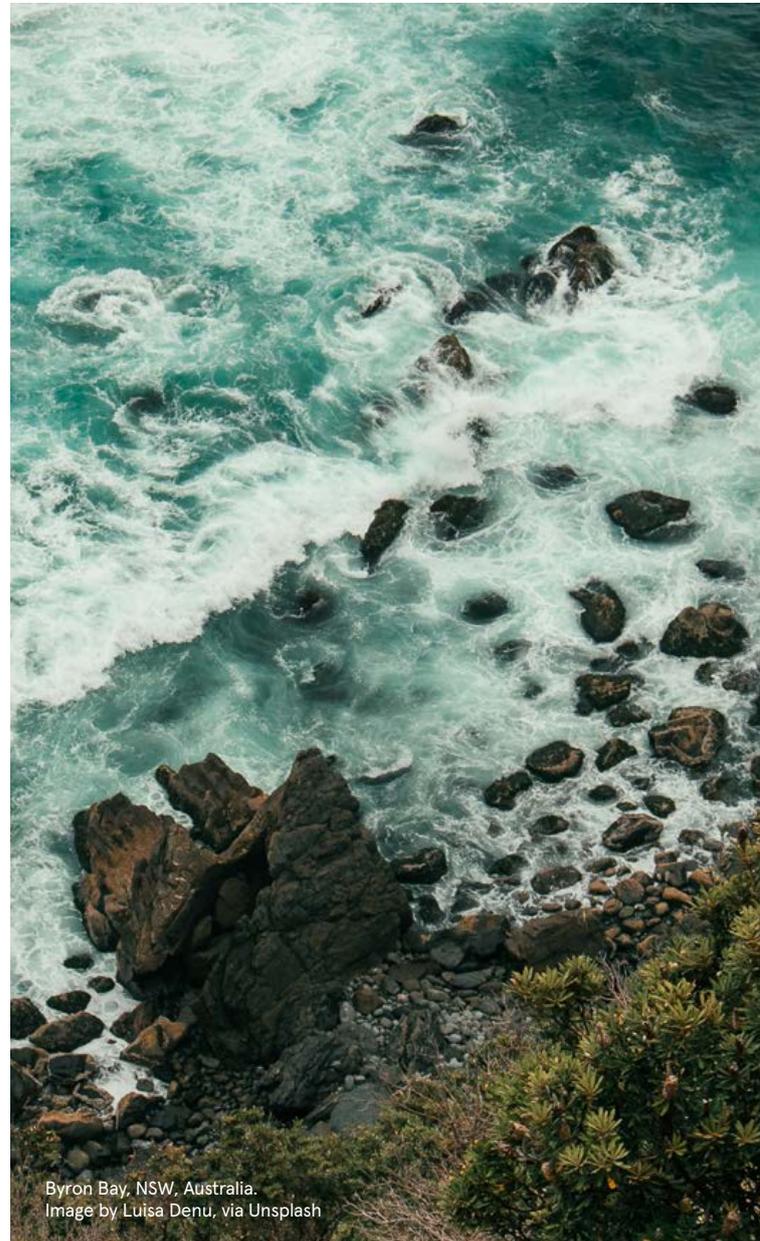
Ultimately, the aim of Resilient Blue Mountains is to bring together people working towards a more sustainable future in the Blue Mountains region. By providing a platform for collaboration and coalition building, Resilient Blue Mountains is working to reduce the impact of climate change and encourage alternative economic activities that can improve relationships between the community and the environment.

## Resilient Byron

Created by residents in and around the Byron Shire, NSW, [Resilient Byron](#) is an organisation dedicated to bolstering community and environmental resistance to climate change and natural disasters. In the short term, Resilient Byron is focused on improving social cohesion within and amongst the various communities of the Byron Shire in preparation for future climate-change driven environmental challenges. In the long term, the organisation aims to build and implement new systems for the production, collection, and storage of food and water. Additionally, they plan to create sustainable housing and energy systems throughout the region.

Resilient Byron facilitates connections between independent local initiatives and Resilient Byron's partnership groups, including councils, emergency aid agencies, businesses, financial groups, and other community groups. The goal is to promote collaboration amongst groups working to adapt and prepare to confront the coming consequences of climate change.

One of the main ways Resilient Byron brings people together is by organising events in which people can discuss the problems their communities are facing and propose concrete solutions. For example, the Roadshow was a series of events created in partnership with [Renew Feast](#) and the [Northern Rivers Community Foundation](#) to discuss challenges presented by bushfires, floods, housing and economic crises, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic. Each event featured a different guest speaker, who was asked to give a detailed presentation about the many ways these challenges were impacting the community. In small groups, participants then discussed their opinions and ideas for helping those impacted, before sharing with the larger group. A research team was present at each event and worked to enumerate and analyse the ideas presented, with the objective of organizing them into thematic groups that could then be shared with relevant communities and organisations.



Another of Resilient Byron's projects is a free workshop series to improve disaster preparedness within communities. In collaboration with [OzGREEN](#), Resilient Byron has designed an 8-module community education program, in which participants are trained to facilitate the local implementation of projects addressing climate-related issues, including bushfires, droughts, food insecurity, infrastructure degradation, and community health issues.

## ReStore Australia

**ReStore Australia** is a grassroots community network that was created to build new collaborations that would support communities to rebuild what was lost in the bushfires of 2019. The network incorporates three of the New South Wales communities most damaged by the bushfires: Cobargo, Quaama, and Mogo. Many other small communities, individuals, and business owners affected by the fires around the South Coast are also part of the network. ReStore Australia was created with the intention of bringing together the affected communities to support each other in the restoration of homes, businesses, and agricultural lands destroyed by the fires. Their collaboration became critical as neither private insurance nor public financial support could provide the bare essentials let alone restore the lives they once had.

The objective of the project is to help those affected by the bushfires – especially those who are disadvantaged or marginalised or have no access to conventional supports – in finding the extra support they need to continue restoring their lives and communities. To this end, ReStore Australia is working to define and collate what communities and individuals lost, and then use storytelling, art, social networking, technology, and fundraising to attempt to meet the needs of those impacted. ReStore Australia has created a website in which affected communities can share their local projects, tell their stories, and collect donations from people around Australia. Additionally, individuals and communities can discover different projects offering support to the victims of the fires. The website also facilitates an exchange of products between local communities and provides a platform for them to be sold to urban customers. For example, on the website's aptly named '(Re)-store,' local zucchini seeds are currently being sold as part of the seed shop. ReStore Australia's social media also features local businesses and services providing aid to the communities, such as the low-cost local grocery stores, Quaama Mobile Pantry and Cobargo Mobile Pantry.



Image by Jack Bassingthwaigite, via Unsplash

ReStore Australia has created a novel platform bringing together a variety of ideas and mechanisms to support the victims of a climate change driven disaster. Though the impacts of COVID has slowed down the project, it continues to support local communities and to help them on their journey to reconstruct their communities and livelihoods.

# Financial Support

In the descriptions of community projects in this report, you have seen that many community organisations accessed financial support to help build their projects. This report recognises that finance is crucial to sustaining a project over the long term. However, this report also recognises how complex and time consuming it can be to search and apply for grants or other support and this can be an obstacle for many communities. Below details some of the financial sources utilised by community organisations profiled in the report as well as others financial sources to help new community groups to develop their own projects in response to the effects of climate change.

## Australian Federal Government

Australia's [Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment](#) provides a series of grants. Although not all of them are specifically targeting climate change actions, some can be used for such a purpose. For example, the [Building Resilient Regional Leaders Initiative Grant](#) aims to support emerging community groups with a grant from \$250,000 to \$5 million for two years to create and implement a community project that makes such communities more resilient to an environmental crisis such as bushfires. For more information about other currently available grants visit the [Australia government's current grant opportunity list](#).

## State Governments

In NSW you can find the [Increasing Resilience to Climate Change-Community Grant Guidelines](#) (IRCC). IRCC provides grants between \$10,000 to \$30,000 to community organisations, with a total of \$600,000 available for the program. To be eligible for a grant, the projects must either be led by, or implemented in partnership with a community group, a traditional owner corporation, or a not-for-profit organization. Similarly, the [Victoria Department of Land, Water, and Planning](#) (DLWP) provides many different grants focused on renewable energy systems as well as community empowerment.

## NGOs and other organisations

[Climate Action Network Australia](#) (CANAN) provides grants to communities, individuals, and NGOs working for climate justice. Additionally, [The Australia Climate Fund](#) (ACAF), which is a non-profit fund dedicated to tackling climate change, provides financial support for different kinds of projects such as installing solar panels or building off-grid bushfire refuges in remote areas. Learn more [here](#).

**Finally, this report has also identified other kinds of non-financial social support.** For example, the [Climate Change Exchange](#), which is a non-profit organisation, provide a mechanism through which community organisations and individuals can share skills, knowledge, guidance, professional advice, and training courses. Similarly, [Community Power Hub](#) helps communities develop their energy projects by providing professional assistance.

## Other Projects and Networks

### Agriculture and Regenerative Farming

- [Blue Mountains Permaculture Institute](#) is a not-for-profit founded by educators, community developers and researchers in 2009. It develops non-formal education opportunities that are accessible to everyone and provides strategies to grow social, environmental and economic resilience.
- [Community Garden Network](#) is a volunteer run organisation who advocates for community gardens and connects interested individuals with their nearest garden. They manage an interactive map of nearly all the community gardens in Australia.
- [Earth Canvas](#) is a collaborative project of regenerative farmers and artists to show the creativity of the farmer and the interconnected nature of land and people.
- [Melbourne Food Hub](#) aims to reduce the impacts of structural inequality on food security.
- [Milkwood](#) is a permaculture-farm-school based in in Cygnet, Tasmania, that aims to share knowledge and skills to create permanent resilient and abundant sustainable agricultural systems.
- [Moreland Food Garden Network](#) is a network of people that share information and collaborate to improve food access and urban agriculture.
- [Northern Rivers Young Farmers Connect](#) is a network of young farmers in the Northern Rivers region that aims to support each other by sharing resources, establish a collective identity and work towards sustainable farming.
- [Northy Street Farm](#) is a community based organisation that teaches their wider community about permaculture and gardening principles. They believe that the current food system is unsustainable and so strive to be a community model of how people can live sustainably.



Image by Sincerely Media, via Unsplash

- [PermaQueer](#) provides a collaborative space to share ecological sustainability methods through the lens of permaculture and focusing accessibility to traditionally marginalised communities.
- [Remote Indigenous Garden Network](#) aims to foster sustainable food production in remote communities.
- [The Living Classroom](#) explores what the future of our food systems could be, creating an engaging, sustainable, and profitable regenerative farm.

## Community Owned Renewable Energy

- [Anglesea Community Energy](#) (ACE) is a group of locals working together to find energy solutions that can help our communities, businesses, and environment.
- [Banyule Clean Energy Group](#) is a non-profit, strategic outcomes community group with a focus on the financial benefits that renewable energy and energy efficiency can deliver.
- [Bellingen Shire Electricity Alliance](#) is a not-for-profit formed in 2013 aiming for a Bellingen Shire with zero net electricity demands upon the grid, by 2025.
- [Bendigo Sustainability Group](#) is an independent and community focused organisation who since 2007, has championed ground-up change making. Politicians from all parties have asked for their input on Bendigo's future sustainability strategies and they run multiple community energy projects.
- [Blue Mountains Renewable Energy Co-op](#) is a volunteer group of Blue Mountains people working together to create community-owned renewable energy projects in the World Heritage area.
- [Clean Energy Council](#), a not-for-profit and membership-based organisation, is the peak body for the clean energy industry in Australia. They represent and work with Australia's leading renewable energy and energy storage businesses as well as rooftop solar installers.
- [Coalition for Community Energy](#) is the peak body of the growing community energy sector in Australia. With over 105 members, this network is a collaborative hub who share important resources on their [Knowledge Hub](#) which connects you to people in the community energy space.
- [Community Power Agency](#) is a not-for-profit organisation formed in 2011, who assist communities in starting their own renewable energy projects. They offer workshops, training, advocacy and policy guidance as well as develop business models. They also have an [interactive map](#) of all the community energy projects in Australia.
- [Clean Cowra](#) is a local community group based around community involvement, decentralised energy, and aggregated biomass resources in supporting local agribusiness and industry collaboration.
- [Clean Energy Nillumbik](#) (CEN) is a volunteer led community group committed to accelerating the transition to renewables in the green wedge shire. CEN started in 2017 with a strategy to have 100% of Nillumbik's buildings powered by renewable energy by 2028.
- [Energise Gloucester](#) aims to empower the community to develop and run its own locally controlled, environmentally responsible, and financially successful renewable energy programs.
- [Energy Democracy](#) establish locally owned renewable energy co-operatives and build, operate and maintain renewable energy parks for the co-ops. For instance, one of their projects, the Orange Community Renewable Energy Park, is the largest crowd funded PV project with solar batteries in Australia with construction due to commence in 2022.



Solar Cells. Image by Karel Stipek, via Shutterstock ID: 722154583

- [Enova Community Energy](#) is Australia's first community-owned energy retailer. Launched in 2016 in Byron Bay, NSW, they sell electricity from multiple projects to households and businesses all over New South Wales and South-East Queensland. Enova is a social enterprise with 50% of profits (after tax and reinvestment) going back into community renewable energy projects, education and energy efficiency services.
- [Geelong Sustainability](#) is a politically independent organisation that supports groups or individuals to start sustainability projects.
- [GV Community Energy](#) is a community-based organisation committed to promoting community action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and encourage sustainable living.
- [Inner West Community Energy](#) is a not-for-profit that provides free advice for individuals, businesses and community organisations who want to install solar by connecting them with a trusted network of solar installers and also review quotes to ensure that people are getting the right system for the right price.
- [Lismore Solar Farm](#) is a floating solar farm in the Northern Rivers region in NSW. It demonstrates how you can provide renewable energy when land is scarce.
- [One Step Off The Grid](#) is a consumer guide to solar and battery storage for households, businesses, and communities.
- [Re-Alliance](#) is a community-driven organisation that helps rural communities in NSW & VIC transition to renewable energy.
- [Solar Citizens](#) is an independent, community-based organisation working to protect and grow renewable energy in Australia.
- [Yarra Community Solar](#) (Victoria) is a medium-scale community-owned rooftop solar panel project placed on buildings in the town and funded by community members.
- [Yatpool Solar Farm](#) is a 630-acre solar farm in North Victoria that generates power for around 40,000 homes.

## Community Resilience

- [Earth Canvas](#) is a collaborative project between farmers and artists that aims to explore and transmit new ways of understanding landscapes as an integrated part of life.

## Environmental Preservation

- [Bathurst Community Climate Action Network](#) is a community organisation which aims to assist the Central West to transition to a post-carbon economy. They write letters, distribute petitions, host community events, and help educate people about environmental issues.
- [Sutherland Shire Environmental Center](#) is a community organisation in the Sutherland Shire NSW. They aim to address environmental issues that affect the Shire and its bioregions. They work with volunteers to increase awareness of environmental issues as well as support other community groups that need assistance.

## Social Justice Movements

- [Bushfires Survivors for Climate Action](#) is a coalition of bushfires survivors, firefighters, and local councils affected by bushfires, which demands that the government must take immediate action on climate change. Additionally, the coalition shares stories of survival.
- [Climate Action Network Australia](#) is Australia's biggest network of organisations who are working to address climate change and build a safer and more sustainable future.

- [Climate and Health Alliance](#) is coalition of health care stakeholders who work together to expose the threat for human health posed by climate change and ecological degradation. Their idea is that people care about their health, therefore, framing climate change as health problem will encourage people to act.
- [Climate Change Sydney Eastern Suburbs](#) (CASE) is a climate action coalition of individuals and community groups across Sydney's eastern suburbs. Their activities include raising community awareness about climate change, taking actions to reduced carbon footprints, and calling upon governments to set policies for a zero-carbon future.
- [Farmers for Climate Action](#) grew out of a meeting of frustrated farmers in the Blue Mountains in 2015. It is an inclusive movement of farmers and rural Australians leading the way on climate solutions.
- [Wodonga-Albury Towards Climate Health](#) (WATCH) is a community organisation that assists people of the Albury-Wodonga region to clarify concerns about climate change and express them to community leaders and decision-makers.
- [Women's Climate Justice Collective](#) is a feminist intersectional collective, which aims to bring more feminist perspectives into climate action movements as well as incorporate feminism into mainstream climate justice theories. They develop resources, workshops, and events to increase understanding of intersectional feminist approaches to climate justice.

Image by Matt Palmer, via Unsplash

## Connect with Us

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This is only the beginning for the Transforming Future Imaginaries from the Ground Up project, and we'd like your help to build a network of inspiring community stories.

If you'd like to be involved in this network or have any feedback about the report, please let us know by contacting the Project Manager, Genevieve Wright ([genevieve.wright@sydney.edu.au](mailto:genevieve.wright@sydney.edu.au)).

Or alternatively, [sign up to our mailing list](#) to receive updates about the project. We look forward to reimagining a brighter future together.



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